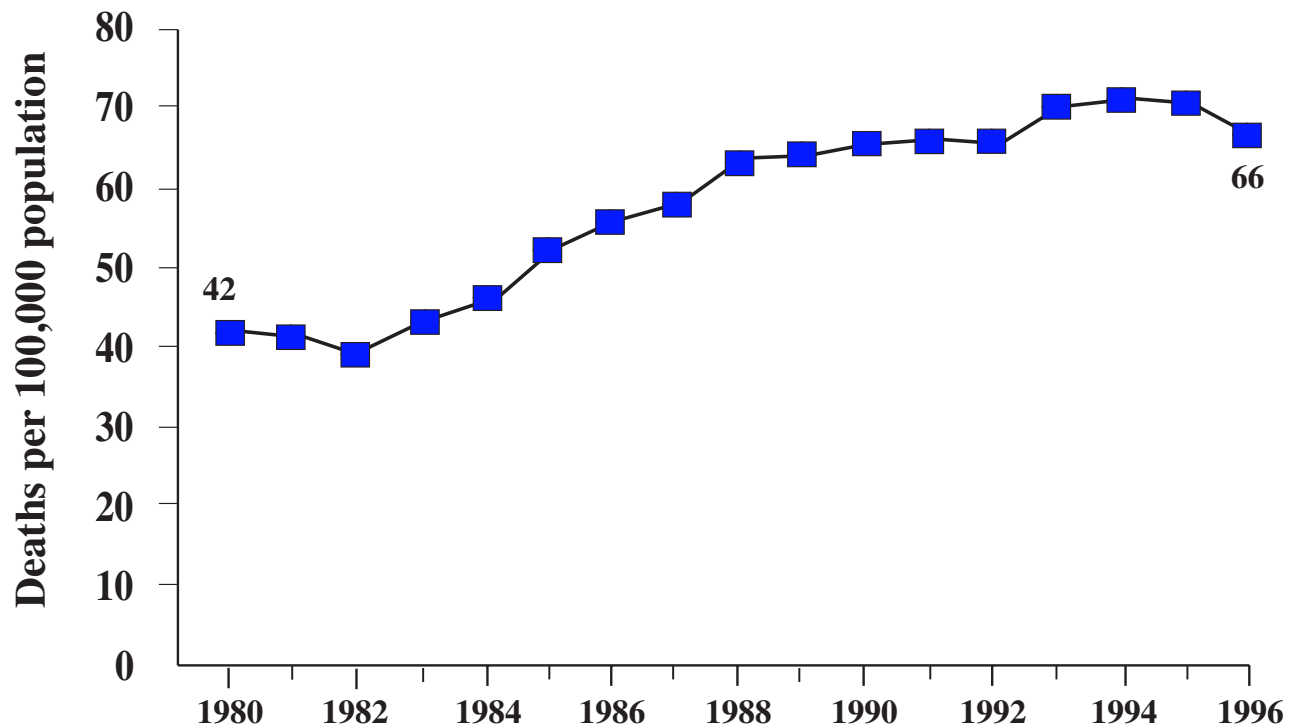


The Facts About... Infectious Diseases

Infectious Disease Mortality in the United States, 1980-1996



*Source: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
citing the Journal of the American Medical Association, 1996*

Infectious diseases cause suffering and death and impose an enormous financial burden on society, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Some diseases have been conquered by modern advances such as antibiotics and vaccines. However, new ones are constantly emerging, such as HIV/AIDS, Legionnaires disease, Lyme disease, and hantavirus pulmonary syndrome. Other diseases reemerge in drug-resistant forms such as malaria, tuberculosis, and bacterial pneumonias. Recent acts of terrorism have added cases of anthrax and threats of smallpox. In the United States, infectious diseases directly account for 3 and indirectly for 5 of the 10 leading causes of death, according to the National Council for International Health now known as Global Health Council. Infectious diseases remain the leading cause of death worldwide, according to the Association of State and Territorial Directors of Health Promotion and Public Health Education. In 1996, infectious diseases killed about one third of the more than 52 million people who died that year.

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What are emerging infectious diseases and why are they emerging?

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, emerging infectious diseases include diseases whose incidence in humans has increased within the past two decades or threatens to increase in the near future. Modern conditions that favor the spread of infectious diseases include:

- **Societal events:** economic impoverishment; war, civil conflict and bioterrorism; population growth and migration; urban decay.
- **Food production:** globalization of food supplies, changes in food processing and packaging.
- **Human behavior:** sexual behavior, drug use, travel, diet, outdoor recreation, use of child care facilities.
- **Environmental changes:** deforestation or reforestation, changes in water ecosystems, flood or drought, famine, global warming.
- **Adaption and change:** changes in a disease, development of antibiotic drug resistance.

Reemergence of infectious diseases may occur because of the development of antibiotic resistance in existing agents, such as gonorrhea, malaria, and pneumococcal disease; or breakdowns in public health measures for previously controlled infections, such as cholera, tuberculosis, and pertussis.

Source: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



What are the costs associated with infectious diseases?

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the direct and indirect costs of infectious diseases continue to be extensive. The National Council for International Health, now known as the Global Health Council, estimates the impact of infectious diseases is \$120 billion per year. For example, treatment of non-AIDS sexually transmitted diseases alone cost \$5 billion annually; intestinal infections, \$30 billion; influenza, \$17 billion; salmonella, \$1 billion; Hepatitis B, \$720 million.

Source: Association of State and Territorial Directors of Health Promotion and Public Health Education

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How Can Infectious Diseases Be Prevented?

According to the Association of State and Territorial Directors of Health Promotion and Public Health Education, many infectious diseases can be prevented through simple and inexpensive methods. These methods include:

- **Wash your hands often.** This habit is particularly important when preparing food and handling waste.
- **Routinely clean and disinfect surfaces.** Cleaning with soap and water removes dirt and most germs.
- **Handle and prepare food safely.** Refrigerate perishable foods, keep meat and poultry products sealed, wash raw fruits and vegetables, cook foods thoroughly.
- **Get immunized.** Children, adolescents and adults need immunizations.
- **Use antibiotics properly.** Unnecessary use of antibiotics can be harmful to the public's health and safety, and antibiotics do not work against viruses like colds and flu.
- **Practice animal safety.** Keep pets healthy, keep litter areas clean, avoid contact with wild animals and animal waste.

Source: Association of State and Territorial Directors of Health Promotion and Public Health Education



Some useful sites for more information on infectious diseases

- [Infectious Facts -- Association of State and Territorial Directors of Health Promotion and Public Health Education](#)
- [National Foundation for Infectious Diseases](#)
- [National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases](#)